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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3624  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7130  
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0731  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2943  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0606  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001711

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HANOI FOR THE SECRETARY'S PARTY; STATE FOR EAP AND IO;  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: CHINESE AMBASSADOR SPEAKS OUT ON BURMA

REF: RANGOON 1136

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During a long exchange with the Chinese Ambassador, Charge d'Affaires emphasized that the U.S. and China should use their cooperative and constructive relationship to work together to find mutually acceptable ways to promote change in Burma. The Chinese Ambassador emphasized China's principle of non-interference in its foreign relations and urged the United States to constructively push the regime rather than seek change in Burma through pressure and sanctions. The Charge enlisted China's support for UN efforts in Burma and noted the longer the regime delayed taking concrete steps toward democracy and reform in Burma, the more unstable the country was likely to become. She emphasized that in a country as vast and ethnically diverse as Burma, a stable union could only be negotiated through a genuine dialogue between all stakeholders. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On November 17, Charge d'Affaires met with Chinese Ambassador Guan Mu to discuss the political situation in Burma and obtain his reaction to the recent visit of Gambari. Guan welcomed the Charge's visit and expressed his desire to maintain close contact, especially now that China and the U.S. were cooperating in many fields. Guan noted that Chinese President Hu and President Bush had met at the G-8 Summit in July and would meet again during this weekend's APEC Summit in Hanoi. He said the frequent phone conversations between Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Lee, along with frequent visits to China by high-level U.S. officials, have enhanced cooperation between the U.S. and China. As chiefs-of-mission in Burma, Guan emphasized, he and the Charge should maintain close and frequent contact.

¶3. (C) The Charge agreed and noted that the close working relationship between China and the U.S. during the last decade had been positive for both countries. The U.S. welcomes China's growth and development, she added, and we welcome the positive role China could play in the international community. Improved cooperation has led to better exchanges not only between our leaders, but also down

through all levels of the State Department. She noted Assistant Secretary Hill's close working relationship with China in the Six-Party talks, and also regarding Burma.

14. (C) Turning to the current situation in Burma, the Charge noted that though China and the U.S. both agree that Burma needs to change, we have different ideas on how this should happen. Both countries, however, agree that maintaining stability in Burma is crucial. The Charge welcomed Guan's thoughts on how to move forward. Guan replied that there had been many discussions on Burma between our countries' officials in Washington and Beijing. He noted that Burma had been included as a point in the Third Strategic Dialogue that had been held in Beijing on November 8. China consistently pursues a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, Guan emphasized. This is a policy they had followed for many years and a basic tenet of Chinese foreign policy. Guan qualified that this approach did not mean that China would not work to improve difficult situations in other countries, especially if conditions were such that there was a potential for a negative impact on neighboring countries and the international community. China, Guan continued, emphasized peace, security, and partnership with its neighbors.

15. (C) Guan cited the U.S. and China's different responses to the recent coup in Thailand as an example where both countries were pursuing the same end through different approaches. The Chinese Government had issued a statement that the coup was an internal matter of the Thai people and its hope that Thailand would soon resume a normal path toward stability and development. Guan compared the Chinese response to the U.S.

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condemnation of the coup and its cessation of military assistance to the Thai Government, which it viewed as equivalent to sanctions. Guan elaborated that our two countries' different responses to the same situation was rooted in different cultural and historical backgrounds. In relation to Burma, Guan believed the serious problems in the country were also caused by issues relating to Burma's cultural and historical background. As a result, Burma experienced human rights abuses, lack of democracy, the illicit drug trade, and HIV/AIDS. Guan emphasized the regime's isolationist tendencies and said that though the international community was trying its best to help Burma, it should be prudent in its dealings with the Burmese government. In Guan's view, there was a distinction between pushing the regime for change in contrast to pressure, which he felt would discourage the regime from changing.

16. (C) China's goal is to maintain stability and peace in Burma, Guan emphasized. The political situation is weak and if the international community applied too much pressure, the regime could crack and chaos would result. Such a reaction would negatively affect regional stability and peace. Guan was aware that many governments are concerned about the regime's seven-step "roadmap to democracy" and expressed disappointment in the slow pace of Burma's democratic transition. However, he said the National Convention could lead to a positive result and reiterated that outside countries could not decide for the Burmese people. Guan said that the international community should be patient in pushing Burma toward democratic transition and political transformation.

UNSC

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17. (C) Regarding U.S. pursuit of a resolution on Burma in the UN Security Council, the Chinese have a different approach, Guan said. Many countries in many regions have human rights and democracy problems, not just Burma, and China views using human rights and democracy as a basis for pursuing a resolution on Burma in the UNSC as groundless. As a permanent member of the UNSC, China and the U.S. have a

tradition of coordination and cooperation on difficult issues such as North Korea. At this time, China does not see the Burma issue as a danger to international peace and stability.

Guan reiterated that the U.S. and China should take constructive action to "push" the regime forward, rather than use "pressure" and sanctions. He acknowledged that Burma issues had come to a new stage. The fact that Burma had been added to the Third Strategic Dialogue was significant, according to Guan, which would enable the U.S. and China to coordinate more closely.

18. (C) The Charge noted that, while we share China's view that stability in Burma must be maintained and change will come from inside Burma, many voices are needed to move forward successfully, not just the voice of the regime. Regarding the example of Thailand, the Charge recalled that in 1991 the Thai people stood up against the military when it tried to take control of the government. While the U.S. was disappointed by the recent coup, Thailand will likely proceed in an open and democratic manner back to civilian rule. Thailand continues to have a free press and robust political dialogue. In contrast, the Burmese military has ruled the country for almost forty-five years and there seemed to be nothing on the horizon to indicate any upcoming, significant change. Burma remains closed to the outside world. The regime controls the media and brutally represses its citizens. Even those who consider themselves to be apolitical are unhappy. The status quo in Burma is a recipe for instability emphasized the Charge. Without some positive change soon, there could be a chaotic explosion.

19. (C) The Charge pointed out that though neither China nor Vietnam were considered democracies, both were opening up to

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the outside world and pursuing economic development for the benefit of their people. People who have a stake in their society and political systems are less likely to turn to political unrest. In Burma's system, only the military had a stake. Guan responded that he hoped from "the bottom of his heart" that the regime would take positive examples from China, study their experience, and undertake substantive reforms. China hoped Burma would take faster steps developing its economy and reforming its political system. Guan expressed his view that there may be problems within high levels of the Burmese military. They have a dilemma, he said, the military leaders want change but cannot find the way to go about it without losing their power. Burma's leaders have plans to develop the country in their own way. Although the first step in their "roadmap," the National Convention, may be proceeding slowly, in Guan's view the democratic transition would pick up the pace once this procedure was completed. China had seen some small changes as SPDC chairmen at the township level had taken off their uniforms and changed the status of their positions from military to civilian. If the regime could get out of their current mess, the pace of economic development in Burma would be faster than it had been in China or Vietnam, given Burma's vast natural resources.

110. (C) Local-level authorities changing clothes would not solve the country's problems, responded the Charge. Burma had been under the thumb of the Burmese military and its disastrous policies for forty years, but it could not wait another forty years for the Generals to change. If the regime moved too slow, it could cause broad social turmoil. This was the dilemma of the Burmese people and the international community. U/SYG Gambari had visited Burma hoping to use the good offices of the Secretary General to help the regime move forward. Supporting the Secretary General and moving forward in the UN would show the support of the international community for reform in Burma. All countries, including China, should support the UN's efforts to emphasize to the regime that it is time to move forward. The voice of the U.S. is not the only voice they should hear. The regime listens to China; their support for the UN's

efforts would carry a lot of weight. Guan and the Charge concluded by agreeing to meet more often to explore how best to push for change.

11. (C) Comment: Our conversation with Guan was uncharacteristically long and open. The Chinese clearly see the intransigence of the Generals but prefer to work with them quietly and behind the scenes. They are convinced that pushing the regime into a corner will destabilize the country and threaten their border and commercial interests. We need to persuade the Chinese that they risk certain instability if change does not begin soon. End Comment.

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